

II. CLAIM AMENDMENTS

1. (Previously Amended) A method of preparing naturally occurring Troponin I, which method comprises protecting free sulfhydryl groups of Troponin I under reducing conditions, wherein the free sulfhydryl groups are protected by sulfitolysis.

Claim 2 (Canceled, without prejudice or disclaimer)

3. (Previously Amended) The method according to claim 1, wherein sulfitolysis comprises reacting Troponin I with sodium sulfite.

4. (Previously Amended) The method according to claim 1, wherein the Troponin I is expressed in a bacterial expression system.

5. (Original) The method according to claim 4, wherein the bacterial expression system is an *E. coli* expression system.

6. (Previously Amended) The method according to claim 1, which further comprises purifying the sulfhydryl group protected Troponin I.

7. (Original) The method according to claim 6, wherein the Troponin I is purified by chromatography.

8. (Original) The method according to claim 6, which comprises purifying the Troponin I under non-reducing conditions.

9. ((Previously Amended) The method according to claim 6, which further comprises deprotecting the sulfhydryl groups from the purified Troponin I.

Claims 10-12 (Cancelled, without prejudice or disclaimer)

13. (Previously Amended) A method of purifying naturally occurring Troponin I, which method comprises subjecting Troponin I comprising sulfhydryl protecting groups to chromatography to purify the sulfhydryl group protected Troponin I.

14. (Original) The method according to claim 13, wherein the sulfhydryl groups are protected by sulfitolization.

15. (Previously Amended) The method according to claim 14, wherein sulfitolization comprises reacting, denatured Troponin I with sodium sulfite.

16. (Original) The method according to claim 13, which comprises subjecting the Troponin I to chromatography under non-reducing conditions.

17. (Original) The method according to claim 13, wherein the Troponin I is expressed in a bacterial expression system.

18. (Original) The method according to claim 17, wherein the bacterial

expression system is an *E. coli* expression system.

19. (Previously Amended) The method according to claim 13, wherein the chromatography is an anion exchange.

20. (Previously Amended) The method according to claim 19, wherein the chromatography is hydrophobic interaction.